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Royal, composer of Anthems for two coronations, and of much other music, sacred and secular, all as amiable as his own temper; Tom Cooke, whose name must be as affectionately remembered as his talent is respected by every musician who had the good fortune to know him; Dr. Crotch, first Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, and Musical Professor in Oxford University; William Horsley, whose Glees reach a higher standard of technical excellence than those of many of his predecessors; and Sir Henry Bishop, whose popularity as a Glee writer transcends that of any other labourer in the same field.

It will presently be to examine the distinguishing peculiarity of Bishop's Glees; it is here to observe that their extreme popularity—coupled with what is peculiar in them, and separates them from those of all the other writers named above and their many less famous competitors—may be regarded as one of the causes of the decline of taste for the Glee, which must be obvious to those who have watched the course of music in England during the last thirty or forty years. Another cause for the departure of our own generation from the musical predilection of our fathers, has been supposed to lie in the relish for dramatic concerted music, that has arisen since Rossini's operas became familiar among us; since, in this style of writing, as each singer has greater opportunity for the exhibition of his own abilities, (or the want of them) than is afforded in the Glee, so has he in like degree greater opportunity of certainly pleasing himself and, perhaps, also his audience. This supposition is here recorded, but not endorsed, for neither the desire nor the admiration of personal display can be admitted as holding any place in the development of art. The importation of the Four-part Songs of Mendelssohn, and in their train, of countless other German compositions of the same class, like them in character if not in excellence, has stirred up a general liking for more vigorous, emphatic, and distinctly rhythmical music than we find in the average of Glees—nay, than appears to have been compatible with the principles held by those who succeeded best in this class of writing. The extensive practice of choral singing, which is a new feature in the national education of the last twenty-five years, has given a new impetus and tendency to popular taste; the unfitness of Glees, with very rare exceptions, for choral performance, and the perfect suitableness for this purpose of the fruits above-named of the German revival of our old English Part-song, naturally induced the general disinclination to the sentimentalism and somewhat sickliness of the Glee style, in favour of the more healthful character of the class of music that is now restored to us.

Observing the declension of that special style which marks the Glees of the last century, and apparently desirous to arrest its decadence, some lovers of vocal music, rather than friends to its

true interest, instituted the Abbey Glee Club, in 1842, whose original members were choristers of Westminster Abbey, for the preservation of that said style which charmed our grandfathers in the imitation of its specialities by a new generation of composers. The singing of Glees and the distribution of prizes, but not the dining, which form the object of the old societies, constitute equally the purpose of this new one; and thus is there every good inducement to perpetuate the charming old manner; but does the old spirit remain among us, or does the perseverance in an old manner, imply no more than an inability to grasp and comprehend and receive impulses from the new one by which that is superseded? As the successful competitors for the prizes of the Abbey Glee Club are now exercising their talent and its influence, it would be vain to estimate the extent of the one, and graceless to compute the richness of the other; it can but be surmised at this time that the course of art is not likely to retrograde, and at the change of taste effected in England by the writings of Bishop, the practice of part-singing, and the resuscitation of the old Part-song, will not form a parenthesis in the history of music, which will leave undisturbed the tone and the tenor of a less exalted and less exalting condition of the art.

(To be continued.)

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

UNDER the acceptable English title "Falstaff," Nicolai's opera "Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor," so long a standard work in Germany, France and Italy, has at length been presented to an English audience; and if the lessee of Her Majesty's Theatre produce no other striking novelty during the season, he has fairly earned the good opinion of his subscribers and the public, by the introduction of a composer already so popular on the operatic stages of the continent. Shakspeare's comic play has of course suffered materially in the process of moulding it for musical purposes; and indeed only those incidents and characters have been retained which appear necessary to give the requisite prominence to Falstaff and the "merry wives." Thus out of a series of amusing scenes, terminating with the revels in Windsor Forest, an effective *libretto* has been constructed from a work which it can be no irreverence to say—even in these days of Shakspeare worship—is one of the broadest farces that ever was written. The music of this opera is charmingly fresh and spontaneous throughout; with a style formed closely on the model of Mozart in his comic scenes, the treatment of the characters, although perhaps wanting in individuality—a fault observable even in Mozart himself—is so full of innate grace and refinement, so instinct with musical vitality, that the attention of the audience is never for one instant allowed to flag. Added to this, the orchestra is handled with so consummate a knowledge of effect, and is so delicately used in combination with the voices, that, although the opera is replete with melodic phrases, we doubt whether many portions of it will be cut out and reproduced in fragments in the drawing-room. The overture, which has been lately heard in various concert-rooms, is full of beauty, and pervaded by a strain which captivates at once by its excessive refinement and originality. The pieces most worthy of mention are the *finales* to the first and second act, the opening duet between the two "merry wives; Falstaff's drinking song, with chorus (which, however, suffered from being taken too slow); the duet for Falstaff and Ford—one of the

best pieces of genuine writing in the opera—and the whole of the *ballet* music in the last scene, which is a masterpiece throughout, considering how despotically Mendelssohn now reigns as the musical King of the Fairies. The performance of the opera was generally excellent. Signor Junca sang the music of Falstaff with the earnestness of a true artist; and we can scarcely charge him with want of humour, since the composer has not invested the part with a single grain of that element from beginning to end. Shakspeare's Falstaff may be funny; but Nicolai's knight is a noble and grave soldier, who recounts his amours as if he were celebrating a victory; and even drains off his flagon of sack as if he were performing a religious ceremony. Much of the music, too, lies beneath his natural register; and those notes therefore which a *basso profondo* would glory in, are often taken with a very perceptible effort. His dress was exceedingly good, and his acting throughout fully showed that he had studied the character most carefully. Madlle. Titiens played and sang the part of Mrs. Ford to perfection, displaying in her scenes with Falstaff a coquettishness which never degenerated into coarseness; and Madlle. Bettelheim, as Mrs. Page, fully sustained the reputation she has so rapidly gained as one of the best contraltos of the day. The small part of Anne Page was very excellently sustained by Madlle. Vitali, who in the duet with Giuglini in the second act, with the charmingly written violin *obbligato*, shared the honour of an *encore*, which she richly merited by her careful and delicate singing. Signor Giuglini has little to do in the part of Fenton: but he seized upon the sympathies of the audience by his very chaste delivery of an air (which although melodious, is by no means one of the best things in the opera), and received an unanimous *encore*. Mr. Santley, as the jealous Ford, filled up the part, itself unimportant, in a manner only to be effected by an artist so thoroughly conscientious; and Signor Gassier and Signor Bettini, as Page and Slender, materially aided the strength of the cast.

The opera was most carefully placed upon the stage, the moonlight scene in Windsor Forest, painted by Mr. Telbin, being especially remarkable for effect; and the dances and evolutions of the imps and fairies showing the very admirable training of M. Petit. Signor Arditì conducted the opera with so much of the real feeling of a genuine musician anxious to ensure the success of a composer new to England, that he made us doubly regret the interpolation of a "Rondo finale" of his own, in place of the one written in the opera. Such a desecration of any work it is the duty of all interested in the progress of art to protest against. The opera was received with the utmost favour by the audience; and we have every reason to believe that it is destined to obtain that popularity in England which it has long occupied in Germany.

On the 24th ult. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* was performed for the first time this season, Madame Trebelli singing the part of *Rosina*, and charming everybody by her fresh voice and fluency of execution. Signor Gardoni was warmly welcomed as *Almaviva*, and sang his very best throughout a part which is deservedly the favorite of all tenors. Signor Gassier played *Figaro* with his usual bustle and animation; *Doctor Bartolo* introduced Signor Frizzi for the first time, and Signor Bossi was the *Basilio*. Being the Queen's birth-day, the house was brilliantly attended; and during the evening the National Anthem was sung.

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA.

THE return of Madlle. Adeline Patti, in every respect improved since her last visit, has given additional pleasure to the subscribers of this establishment during the past month. Herr Wachtel has made no advance in the estimation of the audience since we noticed his first appearance in *Guillaume Tell*. His Jean of Leyden in *Le Prophète*, was, in spite of indisposition, evidently not the part suited for his capabilities; but we trust that he

may still prove to us that, endowed as he is with wonderful natural powers, he will not rest content with a limited range of characters. We much regret that the illness of Herr Schmid, the new bass, has prevented our hearing him in some of the parts which have created for him a Continental fame.

SACRED HARMONIC SOCIETY.

A FINE performance of Handel's *Israel in Egypt* attracted a numerous audience on the 13th ult. The principal vocalists were Madame Parepa, Miss Banks, Madame Sain-ton-Dolby, Mr. Sims Reeves, Mr. Weiss, and Mr. Santley. The last performance this season took place on the 27th ult., when Handel's *Samson* was given.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS.

THE annual performance of the *Messiah*, in aid of the funds of this charity, took place on the 6th ult., at St. James's Hall, under the able direction of Professor Sterndale Bennett. The principal singers were Madame Parepa, Miss Eliza Hughes, Miss Lascelles, Madame Sain-ton-Dolby, Messrs. Sims Reeves, Whiffin, Wallworth, and Weiss. We are glad to say that the Hall was very numerously attended.

MR. HENRY LESLIE'S CHOIR.

THE fourth Subscription Concert took place on the 5th ult., the principal novelty being a Cantata by Mr. Henry Gadsby, "Out of the deep have I called;" the soli vocal parts of which were sustained by Miss Cecilia Westbrook and Miss Whytock. There is sufficient evidence of ability in this work to warrant us in hoping to hear other compositions by Mr. Gadsby. The vocal parts are carefully written, and though perhaps somewhat wanting in spontaneous melody, it betrays the thoughtfulness of an earnest musician. Mendelssohn's unaccompanied Psalm for an eight-part choir, "Judge me, O God," was exceedingly well performed, as indeed was all the part-music throughout the evening. The principal instrumentalists were Madame Arabella Goddard, pianoforte, and Signor Sivori, violin.

At the concert on the 26th of May—the last of the present subscription—Mr. Charles Hallé, Herr Joachim, and Mr. Sims Reeves were engaged, and the Hall was extremely well filled. In every respect this was one of the best concerts of the series. Beethoven's "Kreutzer Sonata" was performed in excellent style by Herr Joachim and Mr. Charles Hallé; and so exquisitely were some of the variations to the Andante given, that several narrowly escaped an *encore*. The choral music was sung with that care and finish for which Mr. Leslie has now thoroughly prepared his listeners; and he deserves the thanks of all interested in the progress of art for his indefatigable exertions in the cause. One of the best of the part-songs during the evening was "Sweet and low," by Mr. J. Barnby, who is rapidly gaining ground as one of the best composers of this class of music. It was enthusiastically *encored*.

MONDAY POPULAR CONCERTS.

THE first appearance this season of M. Wieniawski as principal violin, gave an additional interest to the concert on the 16th ult., although the programme recommended itself to all who love the best chamber-music, on its own merits. The performance of M. Wieniawski in Mendelssohn's charming quartett in D major, Op. 44, was remarkable not only for that dash and brilliancy which he has gained by constant solo playing, but for an amount of feeling for which we were scarcely prepared, judging him by our impression on his former visits. He also performed with equal effect in Beethoven's quartett in C, Op. 59, No. 1, and joined Mr. Charles Hallé in Beethoven's sonata in C minor, for pianoforte and violin.